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SUBJECT: AFTER ELECTIONS: BURJANADZE ANNOUNCES FOUNDATION,
OPPOSITION TAKES BREAK

REF: A) TBILISI 963, B) TBILISI 1021

¶1. Summary: On June 17, former Parliamentary Speaker Burjanadze announced she is establishing a think-tank called the "Foundation for Democratic Development." Burjanadze said she sees her foundation not as a purely analytical, apolitical think-tank, but rather as a "new way for her to participate in politics." On June 17, the United National Council of Opposition (UNC) announced it will "take a time-out" and recess for the summer to make future plans. The Labor party followed the lead of the UNC and their MPs submitted their letters of resignation to Parliament (ref B), requesting their mandates be cancelled. Giorgi Targamadze's Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) is attending its first Parliamentary session on June 20. During the same session, UNM Majoritarian MPs created a parliamentary faction called "Majoritarians - Georgian Regions." End Summary.

¶2. Comment: Burjanadze's announcement was expected (ref A). It will take some time to see what success her foundation can build. The UNC's decision to stand down has also been coming for several weeks. Whether or not a more cohesive organization and message will emerge from the opposition group in September remains to be seen. Labor's and the CDM moves were also expected (ref B). In its first three sessions, Parliament has primarily been addressing housekeeping matters. End comment.

Burjanadze Announces New Foundation

¶3. During a live TV interview with the Georgian Public Broadcaster on June 17, Nino Burjanadze broke her two-month long silence and announced (as predicted, ref A) she is establishing a think-tank called the "Foundation for Democratic Development." Offering balanced criticism of the government and opposition in post-revolutionary Georgia, Burjanadze alleged there is much talk about existing problems in Georgia but little being done to solve them. Burjanadze said her foundation will provide expert analysis of problems and generate recommendations for solutions. She expects her foundation to be very inclusive, representing people with different backgrounds and ages.

¶4. Burjanadze said she sees her foundation not as a purely analytical, apolitical think-tank, but rather as a "new way for her to participate in politics." Focusing on the immediate tasks of recruiting supporters and financial contributions, Burjanadze did not deny having future political ambitions and said she will speak about her political plans later. Media and political reaction to Burjanadze's announcement has been mild. Neither the opposition nor ruling party expect her to actively participate in politics anytime soon.

United Opposition Takes a Break

¶5. On June 17, the United Opposition Council (UNC) announced it will "take a time-out" and recess for the summer to make future plans. The decision came at a UNM meeting at the New Rights' party

headquarters, which turned into a birthday party for New Rightist David Saganelidze. As news cameras rolled, UNC leaders toasted Saganelidze, his "personal freedom" as a bachelor, and the UNC's "freedom" gained by boycotting parliament and refusing to participate in government. Earlier, the UNC discussed establishing an opposition Political Center to "monitor" Parliament. The UNC said it would not consult with other political parties now, and the Political Center will be closed to the Christian Democrats and others who join Parliament.

¶6. The UNC adopted a 5-point memorandum submitted by Freedom Party leader Konstantine Gamsakhurdia. The memo called for a new UNC structure, cancellation of the three-member political council, moving the UNC offices from the New Rights' headquarters, and changing the UNC into an umbrella organization for all of the opposition. Gamsakhurdia also demanded a review of the 1992 ouster of his father (former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia) and investigation of Eduard Shevardnadze's role in it. Jovial UNC members said Gamsakhurdia was too busy to stay for the party, and the memorandum could not be considered in his absence. On television, they seemed more interested in the party anyway.

Labor Cancels Party List,
Turns in Mandates

¶7. On June 18 Labor party MPs followed the lead of the UNC and submitted their letters of resignation to Parliament (ref B), requesting their mandates be cancelled. Though the format of the letter was not technically correct -- it referred to Parliament as the UNM headquarters and to Speaker David Bakradze as the head of said headquarters -- it was accepted and the Parliament's Procedural Committee will make a decision on the request within 7 days.

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Christian Democrats Enter Parliament

¶8. Giorgi Targamadze and his Christian Democrats will attend their first Parliamentary session on June 20, as most of the issues incorporated in their memorandum (ref B) are to be discussed and voted upon. Targamadze said that the new Parliament and election results did not reflect the real mood of society, but his party deems it more effective to continue their political struggle in Parliament than outside it. Vice-Speaker Mikheil Machavariani welcomed the Christian Democrats' decision and said dissent in Parliament is a positive sign.

Majoritarian MPs Create Faction

¶9. UNM Majoritarian MPs created a parliamentary faction called "Majoritarians - Georgian Regions" during the June 20 session. Gogi Liparteliani will lead the new faction of 17 members (second largest after the UNM faction).

TEFFT